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Carl Weinrich performs the complete organ works of  
**Bach**

Organ of Vårfrukyrka in Skänninge, Sweden

- Toccata and Fugue in D Minor (S. 565)
- Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor (S. 582)
- Prelude and Fugue in A Minor (S. 543)
- Prelude and Fugue in E Minor (S. 533)

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NATURAL STEREO BALANCE

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# J. S. BACH

Side Two  
**TOCCATA AND FUGUE IN D MINOR (S. 565)**  
**PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN A MINOR (S. 543)**

Side One  
**PASSACAGLIA AND FUGUE IN C MINOR (S. 582)**  
**PRELUDE AND FUGUE IN E MINOR (S. 533)**

## CARL WEINRICH

Organ of Varfrukyrka in Skanninge, Sweden

### THE MUSIC

Organ music plays a dominant part in Bach's artistic heritage. He started writing such works while still a young student; he continued giving his close attention to this type of composition throughout the various phases of his artistic growth, and the very last work, which the ailing composer dictated to his son-in-law, Johann Christoph Altnikol, was again destined for his favorite instrument.

He had a chance to perform his organ works also, outside the sphere of his official duties. Constantly calls reached him, the great authority on organ construction, to test a new or a remodelled instrument, the invitation being given on the tacit assumption that he would not only deliver an unbiased, thoroughly reliable verdict but regale the authorities with a performance on the instrument. Bach loved to accept such invitations, for he was always anxious to examine organs not yet known to him and moreover he loved the sense of freedom which such travels gave him. At such occasions he did, as a rule, not perform compositions he had already worked out completely. Frequently he just improvised, holding his audience—experts as well as amateurs—spellbound for hours.

At the beginning of his career Bach was strongly attracted by the form of the *tocatta*. This type of organ composition which is of a free and rhapsodic character, achieving brilliance through the display of running passages and chords, was cultivated with masterly success by North-German organists such as Dietrich Buxtehude of Lübeck, and 20-year-old Bach, who had rapturously attended Buxtehude's performances, staying at Lübeck through four months instead of the four weeks allowed by the Arnstadt authorities, felt stimulated to experiment in this form.

The influence of Buxtehude is particularly evident in the *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor*, which probably originated at Arnstadt soon after the young organist's return from his visit to Lübeck. Encouraged by the great artistic experience he had received, Bach created a work whose tempestuous mood and demonic exuberance secure it a place of its very own within the composer's imposing output of organ works. Hermann Keller points out that the composition, especially since it was transcribed for orchestra, is so frequently performed that it has won the nickname of the "epidemic *tocatta*." He adds, however: "Nowhere else in Bach's works do we find as stirring a beginning as those unaccompanied octaves striking us like a flash of lightning, the protracted roll of thunder produced by broken chords of the full organ and the stormy triplets. For four measures the music disgorge diminished seventh chords until the pedal with awe-inspiring seriousness raises its voice." The whole composition is of a strongly rhapsodic character; this applies not only to the *tocatta* sections at the beginning and end but also to the freely flowing *fugue* in the centre which is lacking the customary firm construction but uses runs and broken chords to separate the different entrances of the theme. Yet there is masterly craftsmanship underlying all this outpouring of emotions. The work was written by an organist who had so deep an insight into the possibilities of his instrument that he was able to produce the most powerful effects without unduly taxing the technical abilities of the player.

Although Bach was primarily a composer of church music, he was also a court musician and a virtuoso performer and had no objection to using his church preludes for concert purposes. The combination of prelude and *fugue* was the customary form, hallowed by the practice of Buxtehude, for issuing these types of composition for general use. In a church service, however, the prelude and *fugue* would not be played together, and consequently

only a handful of them, of obviously concert nature, were composed as continuous pieces. The majority were pieced together by Bach, most commonly as a new *fugue* to go with an old prelude, more rarely as two separate works between which there was no connection other than key.

The *Prelude and Fugue in A Minor* represents both categories of patchwork. The *Prelude* is composed in Bach's rambling early style; elaborate scales, broken arpeggios, flourishing passages sustained over a pedal point. It was perhaps written in his first years at the Court of Weimar. The *Fugue*, however, was adapted at least fifteen years later at Leipzig from a clavier *Fugue in A Minor* written during the interim at Köthen. The miracle of all this readjusting is that the *Prelude and Fugue* seem upon hearing to be so suitable and apt together that it is extremely difficult to consider them other than as one continuous inspiration. Mendelssohn, who was especially gifted himself in adding to early compositions, was very fond of the work and played it, among other pieces, at an organ concert intended to raise money for the placing of a memorial stone on Sebastian's unmarked grave.

In the *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*, which is a product of the Köthen years, Bach once more treated a form cultivated by Buxtehude. It is significant that he turned towards the *passacaglia*—a set of strict variations on a bass melody—only as a mature artist when he felt he had mastered all the intricacies of his craft. Apart from Buxtehude it was the French organ composer André Raison who stood godfather to this *Passaglia* (the only work of its kind Bach ever wrote) as the first half of its theme is taken from Raison's *Trio en Pasacaille*. Yet, despite these influences, Bach's work may justly be termed unique. He changed the theme from the traditional four measures to eight and gave it a dignity and strength that made it an ideal foundation for the magnificent structure he erected. Bach, who, like many other baroque artists, was fascinated by mathematical patterns, divided the 20 variations into four groups of equal length. In the first five variations eighth notes and dotted eighth notes prevail. The second group introduces smoothly running sixteenth notes. A clear break occurs after the tenth variation and in the third group the theme is raised from the bass into higher registers. In the 16th variation it returns to the pedal and the last group of variations appears like a condensed recapitulation of the first ten variations with the result that the *Passacaglia* as a whole displays a tripartite construction. After the majestic 20th variation Bach, feeling that he had exhausted all the possibilities of this form, turned to another device. He added a *fugue* built on Raison's theme of 4 measures but adorned it with a counterpoint that remains throughout the piece the subject's companion. While the analysis of the imposing composition might sound dry, Bach's mighty creation is anything but a sterile mathematical *tour de force* and his technical mastery, awe-inspiring though it seems, is nothing compared to the magnificence and power of his inspiration.

In the *Prelude and Fugue in E Minor*, also dating probably from Bach's first years at Weimar, the music is moody and mournful, but without the genuine grief expressed in later works. In the *E Minor* florid passages and extended trills, the standard musical equipment which the young Bach inherited from his older contemporaries, are again used, but with the effect of emotional weightiness rather than display. Syncopations and harping repeated notes show here the sterner, more ponderous Bach which would become increasingly prominent as Johann Sebastian grew older. The *Fugue*, whose theme is reminiscent of a Last Judgment blast by one of the lesser angels, continues the *Prelude's* mournfulness, increased into sadness.



### THE ARTIST

With the release of his first recordings in the monumental project of recording for Westminster the Complete Organ Works of Bach, CARL WEINRICH has been hailed throughout the entire western world as one of the greatest organists of our age. He brings to the music of Bach not only deep musical affinity and superb technical skill, but also a profound understanding resulting from the years of intensive research and study which have made him one of the world's leading authorities on Bach and his music.

Educated in New York, in Philadelphia, and in Paris, in 1930 Carl Weinrich succeeded Lynnwood Farnam, his former teacher, as organist at the Church of the Holy Communion in New York City, and here he continued the series of recitals which had made the Church a center for music lovers. Since 1943 he has been Director of Music in the Princeton University Chapel, where he presides at the organ and directs a male choir of eighty voices. In 1950 Carl Weinrich gave a series of recitals at Harvard as Lamb Visiting Lecturer.

### THE RECORD

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FOR INFORMATION REGARDING FUTURE STEREO RELEASES OF THE ORGAN MUSIC OF BACH PERFORMED BY CARL WEINRICH

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Sweden

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